



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities
2010 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 12, 2010

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (*select only one*):

- ☐ Community Health and Safety
☐ Community Partnership
☒ Community Sustainability
☐ Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: Feed the Bin School Recycling Program

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: Wake County, NC

Jurisdiction population(s): 866,000

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2009, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: August Year: 2007

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in San José, California, October 2010. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: David Cook

Title: County Manager Jurisdiction: Wake County, NC

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator / Primary Contact

Name of contact: Chrissie Koroivui

Title: Environmental Program Coordinator Jurisdiction: Wake County, NC

Street address: 337 S. Salisbury Street

City: Raleigh State/Province: NC

Zip/Postal Code: 27602 Country: USA

Telephone: 919-856-6597 Fax: 919-743-4772

E-mail: christine.koroivui@wakegov.com

ICMA Program Excellence Award Community Sustainability

FEED THE BIN (FTB) is a school recycling program sponsored by Wake County's Department of Environmental Services (DES). The program funds mixed paper recycling at Wake County public schools and provides complimentary educational resources for students and teachers. The program is currently in operation in all 157 Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) schools and 2 Wake County charter schools.

Problem Assessment, the challenge or need that prompted the local government to develop the program

Prior to FTB, Wake County Government maintained free community recycling sites at approximately 40 schools, known as the "igloo program." Operating the igloo program was very costly and could not be provided to all schools in the district. Over time, the need for community recycling sites declined as more municipalities began offering curbside recycling, but the need for school recycling increased as more schools were built in response to population growth. The igloo program was not cost effective as it duplicated services to residents and did not provide enough services to schools.

Wake County's Environmental Stewardship Agenda states that students will "...become environmentally literate and motivated to be active environmental stewards." The igloo program accomplished neither of those objectives. The County provided little educational support for the schools with the igloo program. The set-up of the program made it difficult for students to actively participate. The igloos were located at the edge of campus parking lots in order to make them more convenient for citizens. However, most school administrators felt it was unsafe to allow students to venture so far away from the school building to empty the

recycling containers. The responsibility of recycling was therefore placed on school faculty and staff.

The County piloted several alternative school recycling programs in order to develop a new program that would be both cost effective and accomplish the objectives of the Environmental Stewardship Agenda. A partnership was developed with WCPSS's Child Nutrition Services to provide aluminum can and plastic bottle recycling for WCPSS schools, and Wake County agreed to provide paper recycling. The igloos were replaced with 65 and 95 gallon roll carts for paper recycling. Cans and bottles were collected with WCPSS's existing polystyrene recycling contract. Schools that were not part of the igloo program were finally offered recycling services, all at a lower cost to the County. Additionally, the change from igloos to roll carts allowed students to become more actively involved in the recycling process.

Program implementation and costs

Implementation of FTB began in the Fall of 2004. Twenty-five WCPSS schools were added per semester between Fall 2004 and Spring 2007. Starting with the 2007-08 school year, the program was opened to all WCPSS schools and was considered to be fully implemented. Based on the success of the program in the WCPSS schools, the paper recycling side of FTB was opened to Wake County charter schools in the Fall of 2009. Currently, two charter schools participate.

Pick-up services for the igloo program cost Wake County approximately \$170 per week for each school on the program. By partnering with WCPSS Child Nutrition Services and changing to roll carts, the County was able to reduce its cost to \$12 per week for each school on the program. This savings allowed the County to add more schools to the program, hire educational staff, and develop educational materials. The annual budget for the FTB program is

approximately \$270,000, including salary and benefits for three full time staff members. The program is funded through landfill tipping fees and household fees.

Tangible results or measureable outcomes of the program

Since the program's inception, FTB has diverted more than 6 million pounds of paper from Wake County landfills. The North Wake Landfill reached capacity in 2008 after 12 years in operation. The South Wake Landfill opened in its place and is projected to reach capacity in 25 years (2033). The FTB program by itself has saved approximately 1,000 cubic yards of this finite resource. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, recycling one ton of paper saves 7,000 gallons of water and reduces greenhouse gas emissions by one metric ton of carbon equivalent (<http://www.epa.gov/waste/conserve/materials/paper/basics/>). Using those statistics, the paper recycled through the FTB program has saved 21,000,000 gallons of water and has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 3,000 metric tons of carbon equivalent.

In January 2008, a waste composition study was conducted to determine the amount of paper still being disposed of by FTB schools. The study concluded that only 13% of the schools' garbage was paper that could have been recycled through FTB, indicating that the program is successful in keeping recyclable paper out of the landfill. To keep schools informed of their recycling efforts, paper recycling data for each school is updated monthly and posted on the FTB website.

Students have also become more active in the program. In a recent survey conducted by FTB, 95% of schools responding indicated that a student group was involved in the collection of recyclables. A 5th grade student participant stated, *"I encourage my classmates to recycle paper...Sometimes I see people place things in the trash that could go in the bin and I remind*

them how important it is to help the environment. Recycling makes me feel proud of myself because I am teaching others to make our world a better place.”

In 2009, FTB received the American Forest and Paper Association’s Paper Recycling Award for School Programs. This has placed FTB in the national spotlight and staff members have consulted with professionals from around the country regarding the creation and/or improvement of school recycling programs.

Lessons learned during the planning, implementation, and analysis of the program

- When introducing FTB, the County took a different approach from other initiatives by not mandating a set procedure on the participating schools. While certain fundamentals of the program were standard (e.g. materials that can and cannot be recycled), schools were given the flexibility to determine how materials were collected internally and which group of students will be responsible. This allowed administrators to tailor the program in a way that would ensure success in their school’s environment.
- Educating students about the significance of recycling and environmental stewardship is equally as important as providing recycling services. The educational programs provided by the County (including teacher workshops, presentations, and curriculum) have been welcomed and seen as an asset by the schools on the program. Students who learn about recycling in school are then able to take the message home to their families, expanding the audience base exponentially.
- Open communication and feedback from school personnel has been key in the development of new and existing educational programs. This is achieved through an annual meeting for administrators and Recycling Coordinators, surveys, and teacher workshops. Based on this feedback, FTB staff evaluate all of the educational programs

annually and update each program as needed. Updates have included changes in content as well as in delivery, with technology being used more and more to reach the young audience. Additional solid waste topics have also been added throughout the years, including composting and reduce/reuse.